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Mexican Cartel Tactical Note No. 6: Cross Border Incursion with SWAT Teams Responding: 15 Cartel/Gang Gunmen Cross into US Near Escobares, Texas

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Mexican Cartel Tactical Note # 6

By [Robert Bunker](#) and [Sid Heal](#)

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Mexican Cartel Tactical Note # 6:

Cross Border Incursion with SWAT Teams Responding: 15 Cartel/Gang Gunmen Cross into US
Near Escobares, Texas

Key Information:

Via The Monitor[1]:

ESCOBARES — Gunmen crossed the Rio Grande into the United States near a shootout between where the Mexican military and a group of gunmen was taking place.

Several area SWAT teams responded about 1:30 p.m. Tuesday to a ranch near Escobares, just across the U.S.-Mexico border, where a shootout broke out south of the Rio Grande.

The shootout reportedly began shortly after noon but details were not immediately available. Residents on the U.S. side reported seeing members of the U.S. Border Patrol and Starr County Sheriff's Office securing the area near the border.

Border Patrol spokeswoman Rosalinda Huey said agents had been tracking a suspected drug load near La Rosita and pushed it back to Mexico.

Border Patrol alerted Mexican authorities of the suspected load and then found an injured Mexican national on the U.S. side of the Rio Grande, Huey said. Emergency crews rushed the man to an area hospital. His condition remains unknown.

The man, a suspected cartel gunman, had been shot by Mexican authorities, a separate U.S. law enforcement official said.

The official confirmed a group of as many as 15 gunmen had crossed the Rio Grande, though it remained unclear whether they were Mexican soldiers or cartel gunmen.

"We don't know who they are," the official said. "We haven't gotten that information yet."

Local authorities in Hidalgo County provided backup support along the Rio Grande as Border Patrol dispatched additional agents from the McAllen area to the incident in rural Starr County.

The experience was a bit unnerving for Ricardo Guerra, whose brother owns La Prieta Ranch in Rosita. Guerra was overseeing the ranch hands shortly after noon when they noticed that the roads

near the property became quickly swarmed with authorities.

"Yeah, you worry when that happens," Guerra said. "We all went back inside the house. It looks like there was something going on over there (Mexico); we heard four or five shots from the helicopter. It looks like the (Mexican military) helicopter was shooting at the people on the ground over there."

While he heard the shots, Guerra's property soon swarmed with more than 100 law enforcement officials from various agencies.

"We saw them take one guy in an ambulance," Guerra said. "He looked in bad shape."

Additional information was solicited from the Border Patrol spokeswoman, one of the original reporters of the above newspaper story, and the Starr County Sheriff's Office who have investigative authority over this incident. No further information was provided.

Who: 15 gunmen— elements of a cartel/drug gang.

What: Armed incursion on US soil by criminal combatants from the Mexican drug war.

When: Tuesday 8 November 2011 at 1:30 PM (13:30).

Where: A ranch near Escobares, Texas, just across the U.S.-Mexico border, north of the Rio Grande. See map [1].

Why: Bringing a drug load into the US and escape and evasion by elements of a cartel/drug gang from the Mexican military.

Tactical Analysis: The most plausible explanation concerning the identity of the 15 gunmen is that they belong to a Mexican cartel/drug gang. The drug load had been pushed back from the Texas side over the border in a coordinated effort by US federal and local law enforcement and the Mexican military who had been alerted by the Border Patrol. Further, it would make no sense for the Mexican military to openly risk an international incident, or the possibility of a friendly fire event, by crossing the Rio Grande (Rio Bravo) in hot pursuit when they were actively coordinating with US law enforcement assets. For the responding US SWAT teams, this incident poses a potentially dangerous situation. It is more of a military operation on a "movement to contact" than a conventional SWAT operation in the US. SWAT teams are trained and equipped to contend with criminals in barricade and hostage type situations and are accustomed to stacked (bunched together) movement and entry tactics. Typically the criminals encountered are found in small numbers— usually one or maybe two— and may or may not have a shotgun, semi-automatic rifle, and some form of body armor. It is the intent of such criminals to flee from responding police forces and only put up a fight if cornered out of desperation—even then such criminals typically surrender to responding SWAT units. A group of 15 cartel/drug gang gunmen represents an entirely different threat—it essentially contains a reinforced squad of opposing force personnel. These cartel/gang foot soldiers will be proactive in their actions—not reactive like most criminals encountered— and therefore represent an opposing (enemy) force the US SWAT teams are unaccustomed to. Besides the potentials for ambushes and fires and movement being conducted by the cartel/gang gunmen, their semi-automatic (and full auto) assault weapons and the great likelihood of the presence of grenade-launchers and fragmentation grenades makes for a military-like engagement scenario that is beyond present SWAT capabilities to effectively respond. Under these circumstances, standard SWAT operating procedures—such as the use of stacked movement tactics— could be disastrous in their implementation.

Significance: Cross Border Incursion; Officer Safety; SWAT Tactics

Source(s):

1. Ildelfonso Ortiz and Jared Taylor, "SWAT teams dispatched as gun battle unfolds near Escobares." The Monitor 9 November 2011 <http://www.themonitor.com/articles/escobares-56422-swat-teams.html>.

About the Authors

Robert Bunker

Dr. Robert J. Bunker holds degrees in political science, government, behavioral science, social science, anthropology-geography, and history. Training taken includes that provided by DHS, FLETC, DIA, Cal DOJ, Cal POST, LA JRIC, NTOA, and private security entities in counter-terrorism, counter-surveillance, incident-response, force protection, and intelligence. Dr. Bunker has been involved in red teaming and counter-terrorism exercises and has provided operations support within Los Angeles County.

Sid Heal

Sid Heal is a retired Commander from the Los Angeles Sheriff's Department and the NTOA's (National Tactical Officers Association) section chair on Strategy Development. He has been a longtime observer and student of the nature of human conflict and has written extensively on the subject. He is also the author of Tactical Concepts, a featured column in the Tactical Edge.

Available online at : <http://smallwarsjournal.com/blog/mexican-cartel-tactical-note-6>

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